

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

ANGLOPHONE COMMONWEALTH: GREAT BRITAIN/IRELAND

I. SCOPE

This overview covers materials published in and relating to Great Britain and Ireland including England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. With the exceptions of clinical medicine and technical agriculture, all fields of study are collected by the Library for these Commonwealth countries. Historically, the Library has placed strong emphasis on collecting English language materials and has numerous exchange agreements and good approval plan dealers for each of these countries. A related Collection Overview is the Anglophone/Commonwealth Literature Collection Overview.

II. SIZE

It would be difficult to determine an overall count for the British and Irish collections as these collections cut across all classification classes; however according to the Library's Online Catalog as of October 2007, the DA class (British and Irish history) numbered 65,766 titles.

III. GENERAL RESEARCH STRENGTHS

The Library of Congress has very strong holdings of British and Irish materials. The attention given to collecting in this area has been such that the editor of the *Scholars' Guide to Washington, D.C.*, for Northwest European Studies wrote that, after the U.S., the Library's "second richest geographic strength is the vast collection of materials published in or pertaining to the British Isles."

Works treating the British Isles are found throughout the Library. The Library has a large collection of secondary materials in a variety of formats as well as numerous special collections.

The Library's microform collections are a rich source of information. *British and Irish Biographies, 1840-1940*, for example, has biographical entries for more than 180,000 persons. A priceless collection of illuminated manuscripts can be found in *Major Treasures in the Bodleian Library*. Proceedings of the Irish parliament are contained in *Printed Records of the Parliament of Ireland, 1613-1800*. The Josephine Butler Letter Collection is only one of the many excellent collections featuring the concerns of British women. Other collections of note are: *Politics and Administration of Tudor and Stuart England*; *Hanoverian State Papers, Domestic, 1714-1782*; *Home Office papers and Records: Order and Authority In England: Series One, Home Office class H042 Correspondence, 1782-1820*; *British Sessional Papers, 1731-1900*; *British Pamphlets*

Relating to the American Revolution; The Papers of Queen Victoria on Foreign Affairs; British Manuscripts Project; and British Cabinet Papers, 1880-1916.

In the collections of the Manuscript Division, the Library's Foreign Copying Program (to copy collections relating to America) is another source of major British microform collections. Records from the British Library, the Public Record Office, the Colonial Office, Lambeth Palace, and Windsor Castle have been added to the collections of the Manuscript Division. Manuscripts also holds the Papers of the Prime Ministers of Great Britain, which includes the papers of William Pitt the Younger, Lord Liverpool, the Duke of Newcastle, Lord North, George Grenville, and Spencer Perceval, as well as the *Papers of Sir George Cockburn*, a British naval officer who participated in the War of 1812 campaign that burned Washington, and the *Papers of Moreton Frewen*, prominent Anglo-Irish reformer, economist, author and inventor.

Parish registers, genealogies and family histories, record society publications, and county histories in the Library's general collections are extensive, offering detailed information about the evolution of British society.

The Rare Book and Special Collections Division has additional specialized collections of scholarly interest which include the Joseph Meredith Toner Collection, the John Boyd Thacher Collection, and the John Davis Batchelder Collection. These collections chiefly represent Americana, but also yield useful source material for the study of Britain and Ireland. The Toner Collection is a storehouse of American medical history, but included in it are long runs of British journals. An autographic collection of British royal documents can be found in the Thacher Collection. Spanning the years between the reigns of Henry V and Edward VII, the 97 manuscripts, 2 broadsides, and the 132 prints, photographs, and drawings provide a wealth of primary material. The Batchelder Collection contains a group of British cartoons directed against Abraham Lincoln. Shakespeare's first folio edition (1623), and the quarto edition of *Romeo and Juliet* (1599) are in that collection.

IV. AREAS OF DISTINCTION

One of the largest American collections of British political and satirical prints is in the Prints and Photographs Division's British Cartoon Collection. Once part of the collection at Windsor Castle, the Library purchased this significant group of prints in 1921. The 10,000 original cartoons celebrate, for the most part, British political life, society, manners, and the theater. The prints were published primarily between 1780 and 1830 and include the cartoons of such famous caricaturists as James Gillray, George Cruikshank, and Henry Bunbury. The Library has made select purchases since 1921 to fill significant gaps in the collection

The Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection holds exceptional treasures from the British Isles including the assemblage of books, plates, proofs, and engravings relating to the works of

William Blake and a number of books printed by William Caxton, editor, translator, and first English printer. The Rare Book and Special Collections Division has Jacobus de Cessolis' *The Play of Chess* (1478), the 1485 edition of the *Golden Legende*, *The Ryal Book* (1486), and the second edition of the *Myrroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jhesu Christ* (1490). In addition, the Rosenwald Collection contains the Kelmscott Press books representing the revival of the art of fine printing in Britain with vellum and paper examples. There are also three Christopher Saxton atlases in the Rosenwald Collection. Saxton, an Elizabethan draftsman, undertook, at Elizabeth's command, to survey and draw maps of all the counties of England and Wales. His atlas was the first collection of English and Welsh survey maps.

British legal materials are abundant at the Library such that only a few British libraries equal or surpass the holdings at LC in quality or number. In addition to the codes, official gazettes, court reports, and other publications, there are at least five special collections which will interest researchers: The William Blackstone Collection, the English Yearbook Collection, the British Appeal Papers, the English and American Trials Collection, and the Wakefield Collection. These collections solidly supported by all the other legal publications make for a well-rounded law collection.

There is a rich collection of maps. The Richard Howe Collection contains maps showing the coastline of North and South America. The William Faden Collection has maps showing the campaigns of Sir William Howe and British generals Charles Cornwallis, Edward Braddock, John Burgoyne, and Henry Clinton.

The Manuscript Division has a number of collections treating Great Britain. The Sir Thomas Phillipps Collection covers Britain's administration of the American colonies. The George Chalmers Collection consists of his notes, copies of official documents, and original records of this Scottish-born colonial administrator. The two in tandem provide a fine overview of Britain's relationship with the colonies. The papers of Whitelaw Reid and Robert Worth Bingham, ambassadors to Britain from 1905 to 1912 and 1933 to 1937 respectively, offer the diplomatic view of America's relationship with Britain.

The collections in the American Folklife Center, the James Madison Carpenter Collection, the Percy Grainger Collection, and the Burt Feintuch Northumberland Collection, feature the folk culture of the British Isles. The Carpenter collection includes folk plays, sea chanties, ballads, children's singing games, riddles, nursery rhymes, ritual dances, and carols. The Grainger Collection features field recordings of English folk songs made in Gloucestershire and Lincolnshire from 1906 to 1909. The Feintuch Collection captures, in forty hours of recordings, the history of English regional music from Northumberland. Also worth noting are the Alan Lomax Collection and the collection of Sidney Robertson Cowell.

V. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

The Library has added to its collections a number of full-text electronic resources for Great Britain. Most notable among these are: *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers* which contains the full text of all sessional papers issued by the House of Commons, including Bills, Reports of Royal Commissions, Reports of Select Committees, Accounts and papers, and Command Papers from 1801 to 2004; the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* which provides an illustrated collection of 50,000 specially written biographies of the men and women who shaped Britain's past; and the *Oxford English Dictionary* which is an historical dictionary of English covering the language from the earliest times to present day and showing not only the current meaning of words but their development through time.

VI. WEAKNESSES/EXCLUSIONS

Because many British titles are also published or distributed in the U.S. and thus acquired by copyright and/or Cataloging-in-Publication (CIP), special steps are required to avoid duplication. These steps sometimes lead to gaps in the collection. Publications of small presses outside the major publishing centers are not as well represented in the collection. The appointments of a Welsh-language recommending officer and a Scottish-Gaelic recommending officer have helped remedy this.